



NATIONAL SOJOURNERS, Inc.
Heroes of '76[®]



~ **WHEN DUTY'S DONE[®]** ~
A FLAG DISPOSAL CEREMONY

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INSTRUCTIONS

Heroes of '76 in Continental/Colonial uniform or National Sojourners in suit-and-tie.

Improvise on the following, where circumstance dictates, but always maintain decorum and solemnity, while presenting this program.

You will need:

1. Four flags (current United States Stars and Stripes, Bennington, Chapter, and Camp flag with stands).
2. CD Player, Tape recorder, or other equivalent media player and music. Suitable music is available on the *Heroes of '76* CD collection of recordings. If possible, have a bugler available.
3. Outdoor grill and charcoal or other form of safe fire, e.g., camp fire, and matches. Flags burn very well in an outdoor charcoal-fired grill. However, synthetic flags, such as those made out of nylon, might leave a residue if the fire is not intense. Remove the grate and ignite the charcoal fire some fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the ceremony to ensure a quality fire is available. For a wood fire, have a good bed of coals, then, just prior to the start of the ceremony, add three or four new logs, to ensure that flames are present to ensure a burn.

Caution:

*Since most flags have some synthetic material, the smoke and fumes may be toxic. Therefore, **do not stand near or down-wind in the rising smoke.***

Also, do not perform this ceremony in a windy area for obvious reasons.

4. A traditional Stationed Officer's pedestal with gavel.
5. Chairs for the audience. Remember, place them up-wind of the fire. Likewise, depending on the time of day, place the chairs so the occupant is not looking into the sun.
6. A card table for the flags being retired. They should be unfolded and loosely wadded, then placed on the table. Where possible, clipped to the flag have a history of the flag's duty performance or service. When presented for retirement, the history should be read by either the Officer of the Day or Commander.
7. Pole or stick. Drape the flags, one at a time, on the end of a non-heat-conducting pole or stick. Holding the flag over the fire will help to ensure a quick and thorough destruction, rather than placing the flag in the fire. Placing the flag "in the fire" will tend to allow it to smolder and delay it "catching fire" and burning, whereas suspending it over the fire will allow it to start burning with a flame at which time it can then be deposited into the fire to finish its burn.
8. Fire Extinguisher. Have a suitable fire extinguisher available in the event of an emergency. Failing to have one is not a safe practice.

This is important, where possible invite and engage as participants (cast position #2 - #5) in the ceremony, i.e., members of the ROTC, JROTC, Boys Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, and/or Masonic Youth Groups.**

Cast:

1. **Commander** ~ The presiding officer for the ceremony ... a *Hero of '76* or National Sojourner.
2. **Officer of the Day** ~ The officer in charge of the flags being properly retired.**
3. **Chaplain** ~ The presiding man/woman offering prayers for the event.**

4. **Commander of the Guard** ~ The logistician for the ceremony, i.e., in charge of the set-up of the ceremony area – fire, placement of flag stands, chairs, pedestal/podium, gavel, card table, and musician, etc.**
5. **Marshal** ~ The official that sees all guests/observers are properly seated for the start of the ceremony, and where subsequently needed.**

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(When all guests are properly seated, the Commander, Officer of the Day, Chaplain, and Commander of the Guard will serve as the Color (Honor) Guard in presenting the ceremonial Colors – American Flag, Bennington Flag, Chapter Flag, and Camp Flag – for posting. Once the Colors are posted, they will assume their respective positions. In each case, a safe distance and up-wind from the fire, but wherever possible facing the audience.)

Officer of the Day:

Brother Commander, I have some unserviceable Flags of the United States of America, which need to be properly retired.

Commander:

Our Flag Code, Title 4, United States Code, states that, “An old, torn or soiled Flag should be destroyed, preferably by burning.” You may advance with the Flags for inspection.

(If the number of flags is reasonable for the Officer of the Day to present at one time, he may do so. If the number is great, he may gesture to the pile of flags on the card table, and say ...)

Officer of the Day:

I present these flags for your inspection. These Flags have become worn in service as an emblem of our Country, in the service of memory and tribute to our honored dead “ ... from the shot heard ‘round the world ...,” on April 19th, 1775, at the Battles of Lexington and Concord, to those heroes of today, and in respect to events honored by our National Holidays. I recommend, Sir, that they be retired fittingly.

Commander:

Brother Sojourners and guests, these Flags have been presented, inspected, and condemned as unserviceable. A tattered, faded Flag should not be flown. These Flags have reached their present state in proper service of memory and love. A Flag may be a flimsy bit of printed gauze or a beautiful banner of finest silk. Its real value may be trifling or great, but its intrinsic value is beyond price, for it is a precious symbol which has inspired our countrymen to maintain this Nation as one composed of free men devoted to ideals and practices of Justice and Equality. Let us be up-standing in prayer.

*** * * (3 RAPS OF THE GAVEL)**

Chaplain:

(When calm prevails.)

Almighty God, Great Architect of the Universe, bless and consecrate this present hour. We thank Thee for our Country and its Flag, and for the Freedom and Liberty for which it stands. We thank Thee for the beautiful symbolism of our Flag, which has inspired us from generation to generation. Make us ever mindful of the heroic sacrifices of all who fought under it, its call to devotion and service on our part, and grant that we may be true to the ideals it represents. We ask that in reverence to our Flag, we may build up within ourselves Honor, Justice, and Integrity of life. In Thee, O Lord, do we put our Trust. Bless our America, we pray, and make us messengers of righteousness and peace throughout the world. Amen. So mote it be.

Commander:

We will stand at attention for the retirement of the Flags. Brother Officer of the Day, you may place the flag(s) on the fire.

To clean and purging flame, we commit these Flags.

(Preceding the flag being placed over the fire, the Commander or the Officer of the Day should offer a brief history or service record of the flag about to be retired. Each flag should receive this final honor.)

TAPS *(Ideally, performed by a bugler, but if none is available, music from media is a suitable alternative.)*

*** (1 RAP OF GAVEL)**

Be seated.

[Optional Historical Offering ~

There is no prescribed way to dispose of an unserviceable Flag of the United States of America. This ceremony was originally developed from several sources by *Brazos Valley (TX) Chapter #378*, National Sojourners, Inc., and *Sul Ross Camp, Heroes of '76*. This version of the ceremony is a modernization to their ceremony, and is presented to you by _____ Chapter #_____, and _____ Camp, *Heroes of '76*.]

(Recognize any special participants – scouts, ROTC, etc. – and honored guests.)

Ladies and gentlemen, this completes our Flag Retirement Ceremony. We thank you for coming, and may God Bless America!!